Rs. 2114 crores. For 2002-03, against the budgetary provision of Rs. 450 crores, there was an expenditure of Rs. 441.51 crores (provisional).

Statement

Details of Group 'A' posts lying vacant in NEC Secretariat, Shillong

Sl. No.	Designation of the post	Vacant w.e.f.
1.	Secretary	July, 2002
2.	Adviser (Health)	July, 2003
3.	Adviser (T&C)	September, 2002
4.	Adviser (Industries & Banking)	August, 2003
5.	Director (S&T)	August, 2003
6.	Superintending Engineer (Civil)	August, 2002
7.	Assistant Secretary	April, 2003
8.	Executive Engineer (Civil)	April, 2003
9.	Research Officer (Planning)	April, 2003

Source: NEC Secretariat, Shillong.

BPL families in Orissa

*410. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to have a regular survey/review of Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana Families in Orissa in order to include more eligible families;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to focus on removal of shortcomings in the public distribution system especially in Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (d) The Public Distribution System (PDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments, the latter being responsible for the identification of families living Below the Poverty Line. The Survey for the identification of BPL families in Orissa is conducted by the State Government through the Panchayati Raj Department for the rural areas and through the Urban Development Department in urban areas. The last such Survey was carried out in 1997. A fresh Survey has been taken up in 2002 for rural areas; no separate Survey is made for the AAY families, which are selected from amongst the identified BPL families.

2. At the Central level, the following measures have been initiated to strengthen the Public Distribution System :

(i) The Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 provides for stringent punishment under Section 7 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 in respect of Fair Price Shop owners for malpractices. The Order incorporates the procedure to monitor the Public Distribution System (including the functioning of the Fair Price Shops) by the State Governments;

(ii) A Task Force has been constituted to look into irregularities in the implementation of the TPDS/Antyodaya Anna Yojana in the identified areas;

(iii) The States/UTs have been asked to actively involve the Gram Panchayats in the rural areas and the local bodies in the urban areas to monitor the functioning of Fair Price Shops as a measure of Social Audit;

(iv) A Model Citizens' Charter has been issued to all the States/UTs for adoption.

3. The Government of Orissa have, in the light of the above, taken the following steps to remove the shortcomings in the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the State :

(i) The State Government have promulgated the Orissa Public Distribution System Control Order, 2002 (on 5.4.2002) for sale of essential commodities through the Fair Price Shops;

(ii) Instructions have been issued to keep the Fair Price Shops open everyday, indicating the working hours on the Notice Board of the FPSs;

(iii) Instructions have been issued to allow BPL families to take their monthly entitlements on weekly basis;

(iv) The PDS (Control) Order, 2001 of the Government of India is being implemented;

(v) Instructions have been issued for the FCI authorities and the Civil Supplies staff to jointly inspect the stocks, before lifting of foodgrains from the FCI depots, so that only FAQ stocks are issued to the consumers under the PDS;

(vi) Steps have been taken to involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions/ Self-help Groups/NGOs; Vigilance Committees have been constituted at the FPS/Block/District levels to monitor the functioning of the Fair Price Shops;

(vii) Wide publicity has been arranged in respect of the entitlements of Consumers and Monthly Allotments of foodgrains for the information of the general public and of the peoples' representatives.

Visit of U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Committee to India

*411. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Richard B. Myers visited India in the last week of July, 2003;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the purpose of his visit;

(c) whether the General brought any special message from the U.S. President with regard to the stand taken by the Government of India about sending troops to Iraq; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes Sir.